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growing Old
and
Other Poems

Grant Kyler



Growing Old

...and...

Other Poems

...by...

Grant Kyler

Foreword by

Leigh Mitchell Hodges

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A FOREWORD

TO ADMIT to these covers any word of
self would be as far from Grant Kyler's
thoughts as was this little book until one
Sunday afternoon I asked that he print for
me and others who love him such of his
poems as I might choose from a portly
scrap-book rich in rhymed fancies.

HOWEVER sweet the word-tunes here
enclustered; however heartening, and re-
mindful of such days and dreams as Mem-
ory blends into the background of the aver-
age life,—his best poem is only reflected in
stray lines among these pages.

It is a sort more rare than measured
phrase,—the weaving into life-stanzas,
aglow with work and kindness, of strands
long tangled and trailed in the dust; the
remolding into helpful meter of

Faltering steps made firm through faith
In Our Friend's forgiving love.

So I was glad to have this wish granted
by one whose quiet victory has strength-
ened me and others, even as I am proud to
know he counts me as

His friend

LEIGH MITCHELL HODGES

PHILADELPHIA

APRIL, 1913



GROWING OLD



LITTLE more frost in the chill winter
air;

A little less warmth in the sun;
A sprinkle of silvery white on the hair,
And gladness when labor is done.

A little less eager to enter the strife;
A little more patience to wait
While others pass by on the highway of life—
A little less railing at fate.

A little less boastful of strength and of skill;
A little more wasteful of time,
And willing to rest at the foot of the hill,
To measure the length of the climb.

A dimness of vision for things of today;
A far-sighted view of the past;
While shining with gold lies the westering way,
As twilight and evening come fast.



A PLACE I KNOW



KNOW a place where willows stand
Beside a quiet stream;
The garden spot of fairy land,
Entrancing as a dream;
A place where silence seems complete,
Until a melody
Of waters singing, low and sweet,
Makes rich the harmony.

Where robber bees in treasure cave,
Beneath a bramble's root,
The pilfered sweets of blossoms save,
And store their summer loot;
While velvet-footed chipmunks run
Along a mossy rail,
And dragon flies, 'neath summer sun,
Their shimm'ring wings unveil.

Where Nature's organ softly plays
Among the templed trees,
An anthem of rich summer days,
Encored by every breeze;
And sounding through a solemn hush,
There sweetly floats along,
From golden-throated lark or thrush,
A hallelujah song.



THE COVERED WAY



HE night is but a covered way to bind
A day that was unto a day to be,
And when the sun's bright lamp is quenched,
I find

The covered way so dark I cannot see
The day that lies beyond;
Yet strong my faith that I shall find the light
Beyond the covered way of gloomy night;
So, when the shadows gather gray and deep,
For dawn I wait within the house of sleep.

I know that sunshine follows after dark,
And that the Autumn-death will surely bring
Unto the hidden nest the meadow lark
To sing the resurrection song of Spring,
When buds will burst their bonds,
And life—a stronger, newer life—will start,
And force the gates of Winter's grave apart
In answer to the all-compelling voice
That conquers death and leaves to souls no choice.

I know not when these mortal leaves shall turn
All brown and sere, and shrivel in a day;
Nor when the lamp of life shall cease to burn
And shadows gather o'er the covered way
That leads from night to morn;
But this I know: faith stronger is than fate,
And when within the house of sleep I wait
The coming of the light, a day divine
Will dawn as sure as 'morrow's sun will shine



TO FRIENDS OF OTHER DAYS



T evening when the twilight falls,
And length'ning shadows cast,
There is a still, small voice that calls
From out the distant past,
With sound as sweet as silver bells,
Or elfin music in the dells,
While thoughts come crowding fast.

With half-closed eyes I sit and dream
Of long-since vanished days;
While fairy fancies dance and gleam,
And flit before my gaze:
Like forms reflected in a brook,
Or sunbeams in a shady nook
As light through darkness strays.

'Tis then I see the friends held dear
In youth, who passed away;
The golden days when skies were clear
And work seemed only play;
And feel with pleasure, almost pain,
The joys of childhood once again
When all the world was gay.

A sacred place within my heart,
Kept always fresh and green,
Is mem'ry's garden, set apart
To days that once have been;
And planted in that hallowed spot
There grows and blooms Forget-me-Not,
Sweet scented, pure and clean.



THE MINOR CHORD



WHEN a master hand is sweeping
O'er the polished ivory keys,
And a minor chord is weeping
In the voice its magic frees,
I can hear the rhythmic swinging
Of a cradle on the floor,
And a woman softly singing
By a partly open door.

And a drowsy bee is droning
Just beyond the window sill,
Like the faint and muffled moaning
Of a distant woodland mill;
Far away a buzzard soaring,
Higher mounts before my eyes,
In a graceful spiral boring
Even upward through the skies.

And a lazy lad is lying,
Half-asleep, beneath a tree,
While the minor chord is sighing
For the days that used to be—
Ah! the woman's song is over,
Lo, these many, many years,
And the lad that slept in clover
Knows the bitter taste of tears.

THE SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM



GATHER the roses of pleasure,
The thistles of trouble and tears,
And fill to the brim a heart's measure
Of hopes all entangled with fears.

I pick out the jewels of gladness—
The days that were sunny and bright—
And find they are better than sadness
To lighten the gloom of the night.

I know that a yesterday's sorrow
Is soothed by a touch of today;
That tears are the smiles of tomorrow;
That work is prophetic of play.

I balance the burdens I'm bearing
With others from which I am free,
And feel that the yoke I am wearing
Is light as the foam of the sea.

I learn that the secret of living
Is doing the best that I can,
And offer a prayer of thanksgiving
To God for His goodness to man.

MY QUEEN OF THE MAY



WISH that I again might see
The smile upon her face,
When I, a-flush with victory,
Had won a boyish race;
How kind the look the dear eyes gave;
How soft and light the hand;
How sweet the voice that called me brave
In childhood's far-off land.

I'd like once more if she could hear
My "lay me down to sleep;"
To catch the whispered "I am near,"
When shadows gather deep;
To feel her arms about me cling,
And fold me to her breast;
And in the twilight hear her sing
My little fears to rest.

I'd like to wipe away the stain
Of all the tears she shed;
To make each hill a level plain
Of velvet to her tread;
To pluck from out the rose the thorn—
If she were here today,
I'd plan a feast of wine and corn,
And crown her Queen of May.

A PIPE DREAM



FROM the cares of the world he found release

While watching the smoke from his pipe of peace;

And to him it seemed, as he slept and dreamed,
That he traveled a winding path which led
From the garden gate of an old homestead,
Over a hill, to an old stone mill,
Where the whispering winds in the willows call
To a barefoot boy by a waterfall.

He followed the pathway, all alone,
Through a clover field, where the lazy drone
Of bees was heard, and his joy was stirred
By the wordless song in a minor strain,
And his soul was filled with the sweet refrain
Of summer days, when the distant haze
Enwraps the earth in a royal gown
And hangs like a veil o'er the path of brown.

And his heart was filled with a sense of rest —
As he turned again to the old home nest
A cradle song came floating along,
And he heard once more, 'neath the evening sky,
The words of an old-time lullaby;
When pure and clear, from the orchard near,
Came the twilight call of a whippoorwill—
And he woke from his dream—an old man still.

THE WEAVER AND THE MAID

THE MAID TO THE WEAVER.



H, Weaver, thread thy loom with glee,
For I a bride am soon to be,
And weave for me a cloth of gold,
And warp a smile in every fold.

I want no tinge of sorrow's brown
To dull the glory of my gown;
No jealous green, nor passion's red,
Else I, perchance, hot tears may shed.

I want a cloth as light and fair
As mist upon the morning air—
So fashion me a garment gay
To wear upon my wedding day.

THE WEAVER TO THE MAID.

Oh, Maiden fair, upon my loom
There ever plays a strand of gloom,
And through the cloth of gold so bright
There warps and winds a thread of night.

Yet I for thee will gaily weave
A cloth of gold and make believe
And place within each fold a smile,
To last thee for a little while.

A little while! a year, a score—
I pray 'twill last till life is o'er—
When love may drape the filmy cloud
About thy form—a bridal shroud.

THE PSALM OF GRACE



HE Lord my Shepherd is, and he will keep
Me safe, and when at last I sleep,
He'll lay me down in pastures green and rest
My weary head upon his breast.

When 'midst the vale's dark shades my soul shall flee
His rod and staff will comfort me,
Until the Morning Star shall rise and shine
With everlasting light divine.

No want I'll know when I shall walk beside
The silent waters with my guide,
For he, my Lord, in righteous paths will lead
My soul and grant my every need.

Before His table He will place a seat
Close by my loving Master's feet,
And fill my cup with joy till it o'erflows
With pleasure that no mortal knows.

And with my Lord in peace my soul shall dwell
Beside the everlasting well,
And through eternal years with love abide,
Safe sheltered near my Shepherd's side.

ALONG THE WAY



VER the bridge of life we go,
Quietly, one by one,
Treading the path where all winds
blow,
Facing a land we do not know,
Beyond the setting sun.

Into the shadows dim and gray,
Pressing onward alone,
On through the darkness at close of day,
Guided by faith along the way,
Unto the mercy throne.

Halting beneath the cypress tree,
Blinded by tears of grief,
Bearing our trials on bended knee,
Unto the cross for strength we flee,
Finding through faith relief.

With hearts grown faint we plod along
Over the rugged road;
Hearing at last the glory song,
Hast'ning to meet the distant throng,
Casting aside the load.

THE IMPRISONED THRONE



FAIR hid from sight of human kind
A royal emblem was confined
Within an ugly shell,
Awaiting for the master hand,
With strength to cleave the outward band
And free it from its cell.

Embedded in the earth it lay,
A shapeless mass beneath the clay
Till work removed the soil,
And brought to light a rugged stone,
Which labor shaped into a throne
By years of earnest toil.

The keenest glance would fail to trace
The faintest line of comely grace
In that misshapen thing,
Which years had passed and time forgot,
Until the hand of patience wrought
A throne to bear a king.

So talents sometimes buried lie,
Beyond the ken of mortal eye,
Till patient labor clears
The overtopping clay that hides
The uncouth stone wherein abides
The shape that beauty wears.

WHEN I WAS KING



RIGHT came, with velvet tread and silent
feet,
And bathed my eyes in poppy-dew, so sweet
That I, with sleep enraptured, quiet lay
And dreamed that I was king, just for a day,
And sat in royal state
Beside the city gate,
And gave command that all should bend the knee
Who passed that way—for I was king, you see.

Oft had I thought of how a king should rule,
And how comport himself with sage and fool;
How hold the royal sceptre in his hand,
And wear the crown with grace, and give command
In haughty tone, and frown
While clothed in purple gown—
For he who wears the purple ne'er should smile,
When he is king for just a little while.

O'er all the world I ruled from sun to sun,
And wished the day was o'er e'er scarce begun;
The sceptre was too large, the crown too tight,
The royal robes refused to hang aright—
A pretty king was I—
A start—a gasp—a cry—
And from the throne I fell. The royal feet
Had somehow got entangled in the sheet.

WAITING FOR ME



T evening, oft I saw her stand
Within the open door,
Where slanting sunbeams forged a
band

Of gold upon the floor;
With arm upraised to shield her eyes
That she might better see
The highway merged in purple skies,
While keeping watch for me.

With love responsive, quick she came
To comfort me at night,
(If I but whispered mother's name
The dark was filled with light),
And bending o'er the trundle bed
Would patient vigil keep,
Until the ghostly shadows fled,
And I was fast asleep.

I know she waits and watches still.
With welcome in her smile,
Beyond the brow of life's steep hill,
Beside the golden stile,
Where she with mother-love will plead,
All tenderness and grace,
That he who caused her heart to bleed
May find with her a place.

DANNY JONES AND HIS PIPE



SAID old Danny Jones, as he lay in his bed
Awaiting the snip that would sever life's
thread:

The pleasure of heaven will be incomplete
Without my dudeen, so well seasoned and sweet;
So, please don't forget, when you put me away,
To place in my cold hands the darling old clay—
'Twill comfort me much if the journey be long;
To leave it behind would be doing it wrong.

"When sorrow was sweeping the ash off my he'rth,
I found my old clay the best friend upon earth;
When troubles were rolling their waves o'er my soul,
I'd snatch them and pack them within the old bowl,
And watching the smoke as it fled to the skies
A comforting peacefulness in me would rise—
Quite often together we two would converse,
And mostly conclude that things might have been worse."

And old Danny Jones, with his last gasp of breath,
Said "how-do-you-do, Sir," when greeted by Death;
And when he was taking his last lonesome ride,
The old pipe of clay was held close by his side—
Last evening, while watching a fast flying cloud,
I saw the old fellow, with wide-spreading shroud,
Go speeding along with his dudeen alight,
A long trail of gray smoke denoting his flight.

THE HARBOR OF REST



IN the peaceful home nest is a Harbor of Rest,
When the work of the toiler is done,
And the cares that abide on the ebb of the
tide

Sail away in the wake of the sun.

Sail away out of sight o'er the waves of the night,
Till they leave not a ripple behind

In the sheltering bay, where the storms of the day
Never ruffle the calm of the mind.

When the sun goes to sleep in the vast western deep,
There is joy in the Harbor of Home;
And there's rest for awhile when the star faces smile
From the windows in heaven's vast dome.

THE FORGETTERY



N Memory's attic I've fashioned a room,
With never a window to lighten the gloom,
Wherein I have gathered a wonderful lot
Of things that are better for being forgot.

There, broken and dulled, are the arrows and spears
Of Ridicule tipped with the poison of tears;
And sarcastic Humor, whose quick-flying darts
Were feathered with smiles to impale tender hearts.

A quill that was plucked from the Gossip Bird's wing;
A nettle of Scorn with its venomous sting;
A Truth but half spoken, distorted and bent,
In confidence whispered with evil intent.

And, too, there is hidden away out of sight,
Wrapped closely around in the garment of night,
A bundle of Grief, and a cup that is stained
With hemlock that Sorrow in agony drained.

All, all, are forgotten !I'll never more climb
The stairs to the attic, where covered with grime,
The things that are better for being forgot
Are lost in the dark of the loneliest spot.

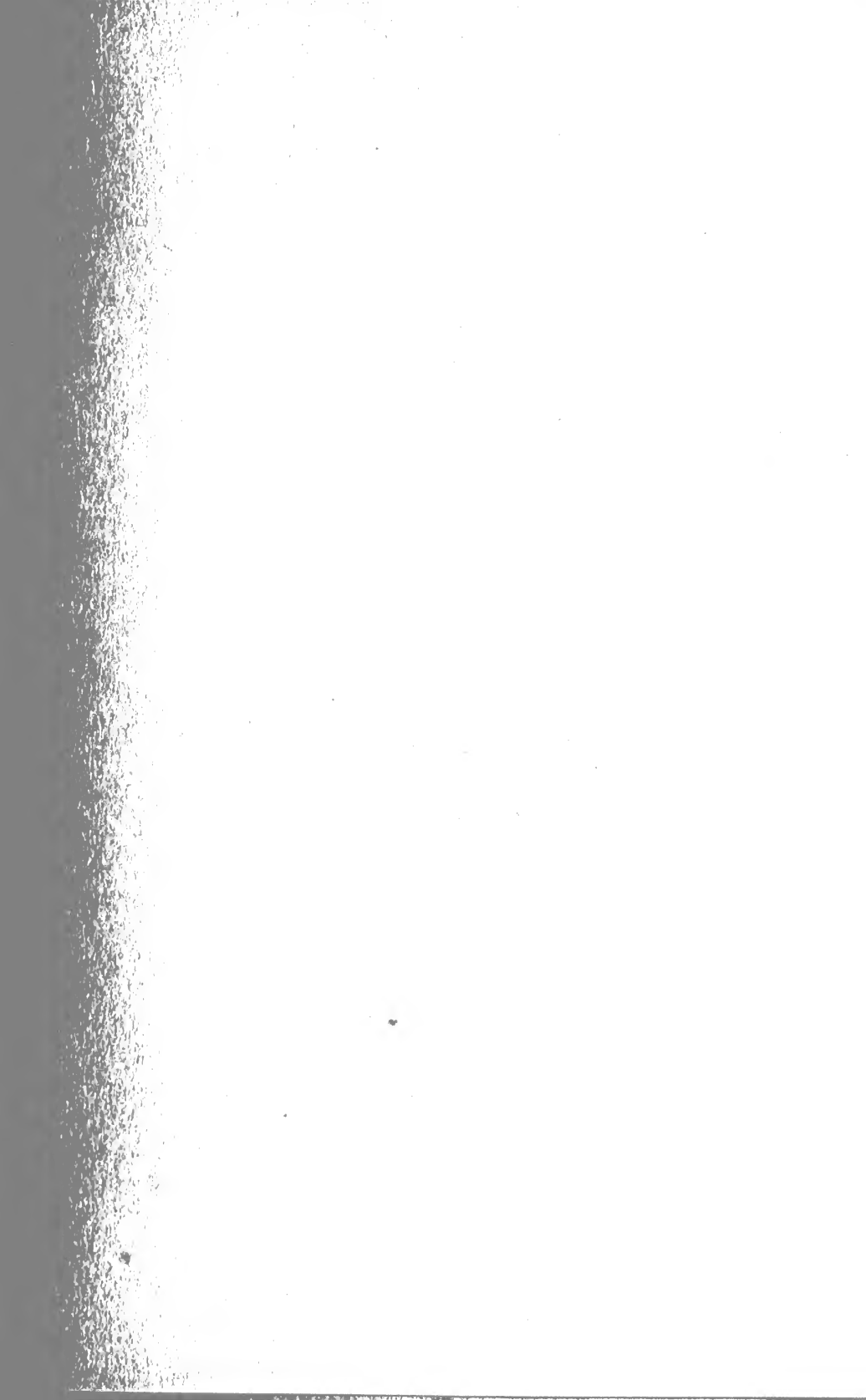
TO A CATERPILLAR



DOST know, thou loathsome, creeping thing,
Whose instinct prompts thee when to weave
thy shroud,
That, recreated, thou canst wing
Thy flight on airy pinions to yon cloud,
And with thy fairy colors bright
Add to the world one more delight!

Hast thou foreknowledge of the fate
That doth await thy resurrection morn,
When thou shalt force apart death's gate
And reappear transformed and newly born;
A thing of beauty, blithe and gay,
To float 'mid blooms where sunbeams play?

Or dost thou do the Master's will
Unknowing that, some day thou shalt receive
A beauteous shape, and thus fulfill
On earth the hope of those who now believe
That after death each soul, like thine,
Will be transformed by touch divine?



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